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One Forest Firefighter Killed, Two Injured While Fighting Coal Canyon Fire

PIERRE, S.D. – One state forest firefighter was killed and two others were injured late this afternoon while fighting the Coal Canyon Fire on U.S. Forest Service land nine miles north of Edgemont.

The three firefighters, all from Hot Springs, were seasonal firefighting employees of the South Dakota Wildland Fire Suppression Division.

Trampus Haskvitz, 23, died as a result of injuries he suffered when the Type 6 fire engine he was working on was burned over by the blaze.

Two other firefighters, Austin Whitney and Kevin Fees, were injured and transported by Life Flight to Rapid City Regional Hospital. Whitney is being transferred tonight to a certified burn center in Greeley, Colorado. Fees is in stable condition at Rapid City Regional Hospital.

“This is very sad news,” said Gov. Dennis Daugaard. “Linda and I are praying for Trampus’ loved ones, and for the firefighters who were injured. Too many times in recent weeks, South Dakotans have been reminded just how much we owe to the firefighters, law enforcement, and others who risk their lives to protect us all.”

“This is a tragic day for the South Dakota Wildland Fire Suppression Division,” said Division Director Joe Lowe. “Trampus died a hero doing what he loved to do, and he will be sorely missed by the Black Hills firefighting community.”